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CIA more active than ever: Turner

By Bob Olmstead

Adm. Stansfield Turner, head of the Central Intelligence Agency, said Monday the nation's biggest spy unit has come through the post-Watergate reaction against it undiminished in size and more active than ever.

Turner said the CIA is "more aggressive" today in recruiting agents in unfriendly nations despite the increasing reliance in recent years on spy satellites and other technological spy systems.

The trouble with a technological device, Turner said in a press conference with Sun-Times editors and writers, is that it "only tells you what happened yesterday."

"When I tell someone what the device reported, they say, 'But, Stan, why did it happen, and what's going to happen tomorrow?'"

As the head of the nation's intelligence system, Turner reports once a week personally to President Carter.

TURNER WOULDN'T say whether the CIA is growing despite its recent siege of unpopularity—which he says is ending. But he added:

"The number of agents is not going down. We are more aggressive—no, that has connotations of being unfriendly—more active today than ever before."

Asked if the CIA also is recruiting actively in friendly nations, Turner said, "You recruit agents wherever you can."



STANSFIELD TURNER

Among newsmen, too?

"I would do the same thing. Newsmen volunteer," he answered, adding that the number who volunteer is "not many."

Turner was in Chicago to speak at a luncheon of the American Society of Civil Engineers at the Conrad Hilton Hotel as part of his continuing effort to sell the CIA's merits to the public.

"As I've gone around the country I'm encouraged to hear people say they need and want good intelligence. But they have doubts about whether we're covering too much," he said.

Turner said that the CIA was in the public's disfavor from 1974 to last winter.

when, he said, there was "a turnaround."

Instead of criticizing the CIA today, he said, "people are spending a lot more time saying how do we get the job done."

ALL ISN'T ROSY, however, in the CIA's public relations picture.

Turner and aides bristled at the mention of former agent Philip Agee, who wrote a book telling of the agency's activities and who still spills CIA secrets from his base in Europe.

"I wonder how a man like this gets the financing to put out a smooth publication and to keep on operating over the years," said Turner.

Turner was asked if he knows where Agee gets his money.

"No, I really don't," said the head of the mammoth intelligence organization.

AT A PRESS conference after his luncheon talk, Turner was asked if CIA bribery of foreign officials makes foreigners doubt the United States' claim as a champion

of democracy and open government.

Turner said that, under reforms put into effect since the Watergate scandal, bribery of foreign officials must have prior approval by the President and the congressional oversight committees.

Besides, he said: "Bribery is a pejorative word.... If you have someone working for you in a foreign country, it's simply remuneration for services rendered. It's not bribery. It's salary."